

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Implementation of the Plan for Securing Nuclear Weapons, Material, and Expertise of the States of the Former Soviet Union

February 8, 2005

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 1205 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107-314), I am providing a report prepared by my Administration on implementation during 2003 of the plan for securing nuclear weapons, material,

and expertise of the states of the former Soviet Union.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
February 8, 2005.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 9.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland and an Exchange With Reporters

February 9, 2005

President Bush. The President and I will have opening statements. I'll answer a question from the American press; he'll answer a question—or somebody will answer a question from the Polish press. And we'll do this twice.

Thank you all for coming. Welcome back to the Oval Office. It is my great pleasure to welcome my friend back here to discuss important international policy and policy related to our bilateral relationship. We've discussed and will continue to discuss very important issues. We'll talk about, of course, Iraq and our mutual desire to train Iraqis so that they can defend their own freedom. We'll talk about my trip to Europe. I'm looking forward to advice from my friend.

We'll continue to discuss the Ukraine, and let me just step back and say that I'm impressed by the leadership of President Kwasniewski when it came to the Ukraine. He showed remarkable leadership. And the people of Ukraine are better for it, and the world appreciates that, and I appreciate it.

We'll spend time continuing to talk about the importance of our bilateral relationship, whether it be trade and commerce or whether it be the ability of Polish folks to travel to the United States of America. The visa policy of the country has been under review for a while, and now we've got a way forward to make trips to America easier for Polish citizens.

I want to thank you for your leadership on that issue, Mr. Prime Minister. I mean, Mr. President. Excuse me. I demoted him. [Laughter] Well, it's not a demotion.

President Kwasniewski. No.

President Bush. It's a lateral transfer. [Laughter] Anyway, I am thrilled you're here and look forward to seeing you not only over lunch but in Brussels on my trip. Welcome.

President Kwasniewski. Thank you. So I should speak Polish in the beginning.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would like to express my joy that this is my fourth visit already to the White House, visiting President George W. Bush.

I want to tell you that we talked about Polish-American cooperation, which has now a strategic, lasting character. And in the recent years, we have had many successful events in cooperation with the United States.

During our meeting today, we talked about Iraq. Poland participates in the stabilization mission in Iraq, and we are full of optimism thinking about that country and about the successful completion of our mission.

We have been talking about the transatlantic relationships, and we are very happy that America is getting closer and is having better and better relations with our European neighbors and also with Poland. We talked about bilateral cooperation, and both President Bush and myself talked about the adoption of the roadmap that is going to solve the visa problem. And it implies concrete decisions that are going to be made in relation to the visa regime, doing away with some old information—old data, statistics concerning the immigration violation from before 1989, easing the procedures, review of different—[*inaudible*]*ble*—that are connected to the visa system, and further cooperation with the Congress in order to facilitate the process as much as possible.

We hope that the roadmap that has been accepted will be a very good solution. Poland will have to observe many rules, and it will bring about a final doing away with this problem that has been present in our talks for many years now.

I would like also to say that as far as the thank-you words concerning Ukraine are concerned, everything wouldn't be possible without the participation of the United States. And without the United States role, it wouldn't be possible to finish the crisis situation in Ukraine and strengthen democracy in that country. It is the success of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, but it is also the success of all of us.

President Bush. Very good, thank you. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press].

Iran

Q. Mr. President, Secretary Rice said today in Brussels that the United States would not tolerate foot-dragging by Tehran on accounting for their nuclear programs. Is time running out for Iran to come to terms with the European negotiators?

President Bush. The Iranians just need to know that the free world is working together to send a very clear message: Don't develop a nuclear weapon. And the reason we're sending that message is because Iran with a nuclear weapon would be a very destabilizing force in the world.

And I look forward to going over to Europe to continue discussing this issue with our allies. It's important we speak with one voice. I'm very pleased with the response that European leaders have given to Dr. Rice on this issue. She has made—her trip, by the way, has been a fantastic trip. I want to thank Aleksander, the President, for being so gracious to her on the first leg of her trip and—or one of the first legs on her trip. But the message is, is that we're going to speak with one voice, and we'll continue to do so.

Yes, Polish—

President Kwasniewski. Yes, please, Polish press.

Visa Policy

Q. I have a question to President Bush. Are you going to—concerning the visa problem, are you going to support the legislation being introduced in the Congress? I talked to some Congressmen; they say they keep receiving mixed signals from the White House concerning the issue.

President Bush. Well, we've got a way forward to answer the questions of a lot of the Members of the United States Congress to get this issue solved. And the President has been very hard at work in helping develop a roadmap that is fair to the Polish people. And I adopt the principles and accept the recommendations of the roadmap, and that will become the basis for legislation.

Adam [Adam Entous, Reuters].

Medicare Drug Benefit

Q. Mr. President, Mark McClellan is now acknowledging the new Medicare drug benefit will cost \$720 billion, far more than the White House initially said. Will you consider steps to lower the cost? Might Medicare be a bigger problem now than Social Security?

President Bush. Well, there's no question that there is a unfunded liability inherent in Medicare that we're—Congress and the administration is going to have to deal with over time. Obviously, I've chosen to deal with Social Security first. And once we accomplish—once we modernize and save Social Security for a young generation of Americans, then it will be time to deal with the unfunded liabilities in Medicare. The same issue that deals with—creates a problem with Social Security creates a problem for Medicare. In other words, baby boomers are retiring with fewer payers going into the system. And I look forward to working with them.

Listen, the reforms haven't even begun yet. I signed a piece of legislation last year, and the major reforms of providing prescription drugs for our seniors kicks in next year. And I look forward to watching those reforms take effect. I'm convinced they'll have cost savings for our society, and I know it will make the life of our seniors better.

And so we look forward to working with Congress to make sure that the Medicare reforms that are in place are fully enacted, and the people can realize the benefits of them.

U.S. Aid to Poland's Armed Forces

President Kwasniewski. [Inaudible]

Q. I've got a question to President Bush.

President Bush. Yes, well, that's generally the way it works.

Q. Sir, will the United States increase its assistance in modernization of Polish armed forces?

President Bush. We—Aleksander and I, the President and I, talked about that. He has been very insistent that—about our mil-to-mil relations. He's been very forthright and very clear, and I appreciate his leadership on this issue. I am—intend—I say “intend” because our system is one where I make requests; Congress has to appropriate the money. But we will make requests that will enable there to be a mil-to-mil expenditure to help Poland modernize and fulfill its mission of about \$100 million this year.

Now, again, I repeat, I don't get to write the checks in the American system. The Government—the Congress does that. But I get to put out requests. And I assured the President that would be—when it's all said and done, that would be the request that we would put forward. I'm confident the Congress will respond.

Listen, Poland has been a fantastic ally, because the President and the people of Poland love freedom. And I know the people of your country must have been thrilled when the millions of people went to the polls and showed that people from all parts of the world want to live in a free society, just like your great nation has shown the world over the last decade.

So, Mr. President, welcome. Thanks for coming. I value our friendship.

President Kwasniewski. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Kwasniewski spoke partly in Polish, and those portions of his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks in a Discussion on Class-Action Lawsuit Reform February 9, 2005

The President. Carlos, thank you. Thank you all. Not so fast, Senator. Carlos, thanks. I appreciate your service, Carlos. Thanks for agreeing to be the Cabinet Secretary. Thanks for leaving the private sector to come to Washington and bring your family here to serve our country. You're going to be—he's going to be a great Secretary. And for those of you here who work in the Commerce Department, you're lucky to have him as a boss. Welcome.

I appreciate my friend Orrin Hatch joining us. Senator Hatch, thanks for coming. Senator Hatch and Senator Cornyn from the great State of Texas are leaders when it comes to legal reform. I want to thank you for being here. Congressman Bob Goodlatte from the great State of Virginia is with us as well. We're honored three Members took time out to come and hear this, what I think is a vital discussion about how to make America the best place in the world to do business. Welcome, glad you all are here.

I want to thank the entrepreneurs who are here, the small-business owners and the association members, people who care about legal reform. I appreciate you coming. I also want to thank our panelists. We're going to have an interesting discussion about why we need to do something about class-action lawsuits. That's what we're here to discuss.

I do want to put it in the larger context, though, about why we even ought to take on this issue. As Carlos said, lawsuits are—a litigious society is one that makes it difficult for capital to flow freely. And a capitalist society depends on the capacity for people willing to take risk and to say, "There's a better future, and I want to take a risk toward that future." I'm deeply concerned that too many lawsuits make it too difficult for people to do that.

And so I've called upon Congress to work with the administration on legal reform, whether it be to reform the asbestos litigation issue, or medical liability reform to make sure medicine is cost-effective to our citizens, or whether it be class-action reform. Legal reform is part of a larger agenda to make sure this economy of ours continues to grow.

We're seeing good growth now. As you know, last month, in the month of January, this country created 146,000 new jobs. The national unemployment rate is down to 5.2 percent. This is all progress. But it's important for the Congress to work with the administration to keep this progress going. And so legal reform is part of a strategy for economic vitality and growth.

So is a disciplined budget part of that strategy. I submitted a budget earlier this week. I'm not surprised some people are yelling about it already. But it is a budget that is lean and effective and says we'll spend money on programs that work. And I look forward to working with Congress to get that budget passed.

It is time for Congress to pass an energy bill. We've been debating it for too long, and now is the time for action. And I'm confident we can get it done. I believe that Congress has heard the message from the people that, let's work together to encourage conservation and renewable sources of energy, and let's spend money wisely on new technologies, why don't we promote clean and safe nuclear power—all aimed at not only protecting our environment but, at the same time, making us less dependent on foreign sources of energy. So my call to Congress again, like I did a week ago today, was, let's stop the debate on energy and get a bill to my desk to show the American people that we can respond.